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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3764
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RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 4115
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5609
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001499

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [BL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: BOLIVIA ACCUSES PEACE CORPS OF BEING INTEL AGENCY

REF: LA PAZ 1498

Classified By: Acting EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4(b,d.)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Peace Corps has come under verbal assault from the Bolivian government. In a speech given from Caracas July 5, President Evo Morales accused organization volunteers of having taking pictures of him and other South American leaders in December 2006. Morales echoed the opinion in a private meeting with the Ambassador two days later on July 7, calling it an "intelligence agency." On July 6, Minister of the Presidency Quintana also listed the Peace Corps as a conspiring "arm" of the Embassy and U.S. government. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) From Caracas, Morales recounted an event that took place in 2006 in Cochabamba at a summit of several South American leaders. According to his account, two young people attempted to enter the meeting as press but were detained after a photos of Evo, Brazilian President Lula and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez were found in their belongings. Upon questioning, the two said they were fans of President Morales. Evo said they were from the Peace Corps program, but suggested their real agenda was from a "following of presidents" program. He criticized their methods and told them "If you wanted to find me, why not ask for a meeting?" (NOTE: As reported previously, it appears the two young AmCits were Maryknoll workers visiting Cochabamba. They were not Peace Corps volunteers. END NOTE.)

¶3. (U) Minister of the Presidency Quintana, in a public speech on July 6 reported by the media, listed the Peace Corps, along with USAID, DEA and NAS as "arms" of the Embassy used to undermine the current administration. He said the Peace Corps is a dependency of the USG and that through the program, hundreds of students from the U.S. have arrived as intelligence agents.

¶4. (C) Morales further attacked the Peace Corps in a private meeting with the Ambassador on July 7. (reftel) Evo told the Ambassador: "You can't keep lying to me. I know (the Peace Corps) is an intelligence agency. I was told so on a trip to Belgium. Your own volunteer denounced you."

15. (C) COMMENT. The Peace Corps is now part of the Government of Bolivia's conspiracy theory. Despite the Ambassador's explanation of the Peace Corps' history and his repeated denial that the organization is an intelligence operation, Evo's opinion will not be swayed. These attacks by top members of the Bolivian government, while in all likelihood do not represent an immediate threat against Peace Corps volunteers, is a worrying development. It was, after all, Quintana who started the campaign against USAID in a similar public presentation in August 2007. Post's Emergency Action Committee will meet this week to determine the appropriate response to these accusations and potential threats. END COMMENT.
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